

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 /069 W
-----059765 200605Z /15

R 191515Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6987
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 0588

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP, IV, FR
SUBJECT: FRANCO-IVORIAN RELATIONS: GISCARD IN
IVORY COAST

REF: ABIDJAN 417, 497 ET AL

SUMMARY: GISCARD'S UNUSUALLY PROLONGED AND THOROUGHLY
SUCCESSFUL VISIT HAS OBVIOUS POLITICAL IMPLI-
CATIONS FOR BOTH COUNTRIES. AFRICAN POLICY MAY BE
AN IMPORTANT ELECTORAL FACTOR FOR GISCARD, AND NO-
WHERE COULD ITS SUCCESS BE BETTER DEMONSTRATED THAN
AMONG THE BEAMING, CHEERING CROWDS IN ABIDJAN AND
YAMOOUSSOUKRO. HOUPHOUET WAS CLEARLY DELIGHTED WITH
THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF THE FRUITS OF HIS LABORS
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SINCE INDEPENDENCE TO THE LEADER OF THE FORMER METROPOLE.
IVORIANS ARE HOSPITABLE FOLK, AND THE WHOLE COUNTRY
HAS PROBABLY DERIVED SATISFACTION FROM HAVING PUT
ON AN EXTREMELY GOOD SHOW. IN ADDITION TO RE-
INFORCING BILATERAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES,
THE VISIT HAD WIDER IMPLICATIONS, AND MAY HAVE BEEN
INTENDED TO CONVEY AT LEAST AN OBLIQUE MESSAGE TO

THE U.S. HOUPHOUET AND GISCARD HAVE MET FIVE TIMES IN THE PAST YEAR, AND HOUPHOUET HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY OUTSPOKEN ON THE NEED FOR EUROPE AND THE U.S. TO BECOME MORE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN AFRICA. DURING THIS VISIT GISCARD AVOIDED DETAILED PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF SECURITY ISSUES. BUT FRENCH ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE DURING THE SHABA AFFAIR IS STILL FRESH IN MEMORY HERE. GISCARD'S CALL FOR AFRICAN-EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY AND HIS ASSURANCE THAT "FRANCE WILL HONOR HER COMMITMENTS" ARE WHAT HOUPHOUET WANTED TO HEAR AND WOULD HOPE TO ELICIT FROM OTHER EUROPEANS AND FROM THE U.S. END SUMMARY

1. IN GIVING GISCARD A VERY WARM, EXTENSIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME, PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY HAS REITERATED THE OBVIOUS: THAT FRANCO-IVORIAN RELATIONS ARE EXCELLENT; AND THAT THE FRENCH ROLE IN IVORY COAST'S DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY IS CRITICAL AND PERVASIVE. HOUPHOUET ALSO HAD A REASSURING WORD FOR THE FRENCH COMMUNITY HERE, AND "FRATERNITE MATIN" PUBLISHED A LETTER FROM A FRENCH RESIDENT THANKING HOUPHOUET AND IVORY COAST FOR THE RECEPTION OF GISCARD. THE VISIT WAS A BENEDICTION OF THE FRENCH ROLE IN IVORY COAST, AND ALSO OF IVORY COAST'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE "WESTERN FAMILY."

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2. ALTHOUGH HOUPHOUET MADE MENTION OF FRANCE'S ROLE IN SHABA, GISCARD WAS UNSPECIFIC ABOUT SECURITY COMMITMENTS. THE AFRICAN-EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY PACT "WILL BE BORN SOMEDAY," AND WILL INCLUDE AN UNDEFINED SECURITY RELATIONSHIP. "FRANCE WILL HONOR HER COMMITMENTS, BUT GISCARD AVOIDED SAYING WHAT THESE WERE. NEVERTHELESS, THE SENSE OF FRENCH COMMITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT WAS PALPABLE DURING THIS LONG VISIT, AND PROBABLY FELT BY OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. HOUPHOUET HAS FREQUENTLY VOICED HIS CONCERN THAT SOVIET INTERVENTION IN AFRICA IS AIMED AT DEPRIVING EUROPE OF AFRICAN RAW MATERIALS, AND THAT EUROPE AND THE U.S. MIGHT FAIL TO REACT IN TIME. GISCARD'S SUPPORT FOR SOME THIRD WORLD POSITIONS ON NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, AND HIS TALK OF AFRICAN-EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY, HOWEVER VAGUE, CONVEYED AN ASSURANCE THAT ONE EUROPEAN COUNTRY HAS GOTTEN THE MESSAGE.

3. FIVE DAYS SEEMS A LONG TIME TO SPEND IN IVORY COAST SHORTLY BEFORE ELECTIONS. FROM THE SATISFACTION

SHOWN BY BOTH HOUPHOUET AND GISCARD IT WAS WORTH IT
TO BOTH SIDES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERP, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ABIDJA00588
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780030-0388
Format: TEL
From: ABIDJAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780147/aaaabnnq.tel
Line Count: 119
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: abf23be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ABIDJAN 417
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3750951
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRANCO-IVORIAN RELATIONS: GISCARD IN IVORY COAST
TAGS: PDIP, IV, FR, (GISCARD D'ESTAING, VALERY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/abf23be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014